1: Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

WILD PLANTS OF ECONOMIC VALUE

Moki-oone

137 824 In Thomson's version (215, p. 527) of the Hotu-matua legend it is said that after they landed, the king and his followers lived on nuts of a creeping plant (*moki-oone*) found growing along the ground, while waiting for their introduced plants to grow. I was unable to get information about the *moki-oone* which may have either disappeared or become known under another name.

Bulrushes

Bulrushes, *ngaatu* (*Scirpus riparius* var. *paschalis*) are abundant in crater lakes (*rano*). They grow particularly high and large in Rano-kao. Formerly *ngaatu* were of great economic value to the natives who used them for covering their huts and for making sleeping mats, baskets, and fishing floats. They compensated to some extent for the lack of wood on the island.

Nightshade

Nightshade (*Solanum forsteri*) is called *poporo* by the islanders. On some native plantations Forster (82, p. 578) noticed "a species of nightshade [*Solanum nigrum*?], which is made use of at Taheitee and the neighbouring islands as a vulnerary remedy and may, for ought I know, be cultivated here for the same purpose." La Pérouse (130, vol. 1, p. 76) mentions as a food "a small fruit which grows on the rocks at seaside, resembling the bunches of raisins found in the neighbourhood of the tropics in the Atlantic Ocean." He probably alludes to the *poporo*, which he correctly classifies as a *Solanum*. La Pérouse and his naturalist, De Langle, believed nightshade was a cultivated [261] plant, but present islanders deny it; they told me that its berries were eaten by children and adults only in time of famine. The *poporo* grows wild near the settlements, especially in cultivated fields.

Plants Eaten in Time of Famine

261 137 824 278 Several other plants were used as food only in time of famine. The *huataru* (*Chenopodium ambiguum*), of which the vegetative parts were occasionally eaten, is a very common Easter Island plant. Like the old Hawaiians, Easter Islanders were sometimes forced to eat the stems and roots of the beach morning-glory, *tanoa* (*Ipomoea pes-caprae*). The *here-po* mentioned by Cooke (54, p. 777) as edible and described as "ice-plant" was undoubtedly *Tetragonia expansa*. *Kavakava-atua*, a fern, is mentioned among the plants which grew as products of a king's power. The natives used it as a medicine and only occasionally as food. The roots of another fern, *riku*, and those of the *hikikioe* (*Cyperus vegetus*) were eaten when no other food was available. Berries called *pua-nakonako* were also considered edible.

1: Metraux E-5 (1934-1935) 1940
OY2 Easter Islanders OY2

who was about the only able-bodied man on the island who did not participate. It was decidedly a go-as-you-please-race, every man selecting his route to the sea by the circuitous paths or directly over the face of the cliff, and many fatal falls are recorded as the result. The swim to Motu Kau Kau was a trifling matter, the chief difficulty being to return with an egg unbroken through the general scramble. 796

The *hopu* swam over to the island, supported by big bundles of reeds used as floats (*pora*). Carefully wrapped in the mats of the *pora* were provisions of all sorts which were "still hot when they landed on Motu-nui." To cross the 2 kilometers between the main island and Motu-nui was not an easy sport. The waves are generally high and often sharks haunt these waters. 796 48

On the islet, the *hopu* were provided with food which was cooked by the people gathered at Orongo and taken over to the island by servants who used *pora* for transportation. When the weather was stormy communications between Motu-nui and the main island ceased. Those who were provident dried banana and sweet potato skins in the sun to be eaten in case of emergency. 796 [26] 251

Whilst the *hopu* waited on the islet for the first *manu-tara* eggs, their masters and the members of the *ao* performed various rites at Orongo to propitiate the gods. Dances were held in front of the houses, and chants were sung for the gods by the *rongorongo* who occupied the houses at the end of the stone village, near the carved rocks. The dual political division of the island was reflected even in the abodes of the narrators during the feast. Those from Hotu-iti dwelt in the western group of houses, and those from Tuu in the houses to the east. Sometimes the king went to Mataveri to call on the people gathered there, but he never ascended to Orongo. At least that was the custom adopted by Nga-ara who was probably following an old tradition. Offerings and prayers were addressed to the gods Makemake and Haua who had created the birds and established the cult in honor of themselves. Makemake designated the man to be *tangata-manu* and thus incarnate the god. Routledge (194, p. 260) mentions *vie* Hoa and *vie* Kenatea among the deities who were worshipped at Orongo. [619] [782]

Tepano stated repeatedly that at Orongo there were many old men (*koro-hua*) who were sorcerers; they recited charms for the success of the competitors and had long talks with the gods, who entered some of the houses of Orongo. When a god was thought to be in a house, only the priest could enter and inquire about the contestant's chances of winning. While the priests tried to make the deities favorable toward those who resorted to them (*hatu o te manu kia Haua, kia kia Makemake*), the young people were busy making earth ovens, the contents of which they distributed lavishly among the priests or sent to the *hopu* on the island. Some of the food was set apart by the *ivi-atua* and consecrated to the gods with the traditional formula, "Ka too ma Haua, ma Makemake . . . " Tepano's reference to the sharp voices of the priests when they spoke to the gods is probably a personal memory of some [887] [793]